

Introduced by Senator Wyland

February 23, 2012

An act to add Section 51008.5 to the Education Code, relating to school curriculum.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1325, as introduced, Wyland. School curriculum: history and government.

Existing law requires the adopted course of study for grades 1 to 6, inclusive, and grades 7 to 12, inclusive, to include courses in the social sciences for the purpose of, among other things, providing pupils with a foundation for understanding the history, resources, development, and government of California and the United States of America.

This bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to consider methods for enhancing pupil knowledge of, and pride in, our history and form of government and for increasing civic participation. The bill would set forth methods that the Superintendent and the state board should consider to accomplish these goals, which include, among other things, developing new curriculum frameworks and, if necessary, standards, expanding the time, and grades in which, American history and government are studied, and requiring a basic understanding of United States history in order to graduate from high school.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 51008.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

51008.5. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) Over the last 20 years and more, high school pupils have significantly less knowledge of American history and government than previous generations.

(2) Pupils and young adults over this period know significantly less about current events, and they subscribe at a significantly lower rate to newspapers and news periodicals.

(3) Pupils and young adults have, over time, less faith and pride in American government and its institutions.

(4) Pupils and young people vote at significantly lower rates than their elders.

(b) The Superintendent and the state board shall consider methods for accomplishing both of the following:

(1) Enhancing pupil knowledge of, and pride in, our history and form of government.

(2) Increasing all levels of civic participation, from knowledge of current events to regular voting in elections.

(c) To accomplish the goals set forth in subdivision (b), the Superintendent and state board may consider the following methods:

(1) Developing new curriculum frameworks and, if necessary, standards that engage pupils in learning about American history and government from oral histories to biographical sketches and age-appropriate descriptions of heroic efforts on the part of Americans to build our society and its institutions.

(2) Expanding the time devoted to the study of American history and government and the grades in which that study is provided.

(3) Developing pride in American values, history, and government through the comparative study of other cultures and histories.

(4) Comparing the success of American society and government in developing a society governed by the democratically devised rule of law with societies that, although desiring to be so governed, have struggled to reach this accomplishment.

1 (5) Incorporating in the curriculum, at age-appropriate levels,
2 the objective analysis of both historical and modern governmental
3 policies so that pupils may learn to understand the complexity of
4 many issues, to view those policies from different perspectives,
5 to consider evidence, and to reach their own conclusions.

6 (6) Comparing American and Western democracies and histories
7 of those in other regions of the world, and the role that American
8 democracy and society may play in modern history.

9 (7) Requiring basic understanding of United States history in
10 order to graduate from high school.

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